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Item 4 (l) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/2010/24, chap. I.A), the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly adopted in 2010 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Council and the Assembly. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2011/1.

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Policy decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

I. World Statistics Day

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

1. Acknowledging the importance of reliable and timely statistics and indicators of a country's progress, which were indispensable for informed policy decision-making and monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly, in resolution 64/267, decided to designate 20 October as World Statistics Day. In its resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for the United Nations to observe the Day, to bring the text to the attention of Member States and United Nations organizations, and to report on its implementation to the Statistical Commission at its forty-second session. Further, the Assembly invited stakeholders from the United Nations system and civil society to observe the Day appropriately.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

2. At its forty-second session, the Statistical Commission, under agenda item 3 (a), will discuss a report (E/CN.3/2011/2) which presents an overview of activities undertaken by the statistical community worldwide to mark the first World Statistics Day, held on 20 October 2010. The Commission will in particular discuss the relevance and effectiveness of the activities and proposed options for future celebrations of World Statistics Day.

II. Follow-up to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

3. The outcome document of the High-level Meeting (resolution 65/1) was adopted by the General Assembly on 22 September 2010. It includes an action agenda for achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The document makes reference to data and statistics in three places:

(a) In paragraph 68, the Heads of State and Government recognize that all countries require adequate, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including demographic data, in order to design better programmes and policies for sustainable development; commit to strengthening national statistical systems, including for effectively monitoring progress towards the Millennium Development Goals; and reiterate the need to increase efforts in support of statistical capacity-building in developing countries;

(b) In paragraph 72 (h), the signatories commit themselves to accelerating progress in achieving Goal 3 by improving national-level capacity to monitor and report on progress, gaps and opportunities through better generation and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data, including with the support of the international community;

(c) In paragraph 73 (j), the signatories pledge to support the use of national data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems that can track sex-disaggregated access to health-care services.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

4. Since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators as well as related issues of capacity-building on a continuous basis. At its forty-second session, the Commission will consider reports of the Secretary-General on development indicators (E/CN.3/2011/13) and on statistical capacity-building (E/CN.3/2011/18).

5. The United Nations Statistics Division currently executes several multi-year statistical capacity-building projects covering a wide range of statistical areas with a special focus on data collection and dissemination of indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the Division also executes several capacity-building projects in support of the 2010 population and housing census round and for the improvement of gender statistics. This will contribute to increasing the availability of sex- and age-disaggregated data.

III. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

6. As mandated in Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairs of the functional commissions is to be held annually in the beginning of the year. Furthermore, the Council adopted its first multi-year work programme for the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews in October 2007. In its decision 2008/258, the Council decided to adopt for its annual ministerial-level substantive review for 2011 the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education". The substantive contributions of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

7. The Chair of the Statistical Commission will participate in the meeting of the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council with the chairs of the functional commissions, to be held on 16 February 2011, and will provide input to the Council's 2011 annual ministerial review. The Chair will brief the Bureau of the Council on the Commission's methodological work in the area of education statistics. The Statistical Commission had conducted an in-depth programme review of education statistics in 2007 (see E/2007/24). The Commission will consider education statistics at its forty-second session under agenda item 4 (c) on the basis of a report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization focusing on the establishment of an intersecretariat working group on education statistics and the proposed revisions to the International Standard Classifications of Education (E/CN.3/2011/23).

IV. Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

8. At the initiative of the Statistical Commission, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2005/13 on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, in which it requested increased support for the Programme in terms of strengthening the capacity of national statistical programmes. The Council also adopted resolution 2006/6 on strengthening national statistical capacity.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

9. At its forty-second session, the Commission will consider specific follow-up actions to the Council resolutions cited above under agenda item 4 (a), "Population and housing censuses", item 3 (l), "Statistical capacity-building" and item 3 (j), "Statistics on human development". The documentation presented under these items (see E/CN.3/2011/1) describes in detail activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and by its partner agencies to improve the availability and quality of data, in supporting the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and to improve the coordination of technical cooperation activities.

V. Global geospatial information management

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

10. At the initiative of the eighteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (see E/CONF.100/9) and the Statistical

Commission (decision 41/110), the Economic and Social Council, in decision 2010/240, decided to request the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its 2011 substantive session a report on global geospatial information management.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

11. The Commission is kept informed of the latest developments in this field. At the forty-second session, it will consider global geospatial information management under agenda item 4 (n). It will have before it a report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/2011/34).

VI. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data on ageing and people with disabilities

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

12. At the time of drafting the present document, two draft resolutions on persons with disability and on ageing were being considered by the General Assembly. Both would call for efforts to improve data collection with respect to persons with disabilities and on ageing.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

13. The Commission continues to be active in both of these important policy areas, supporting the development of new methodologies where necessary and improving the collection of data. Data generated by the current 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme will improve the availability of information regarding ageing (see also sect. IV above). The issue of disability statistics is regularly considered by the Commission: the Commission reviewed the progress of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics regarding the development of suitable questions to be included in national censuses or sample-based national surveys at its forty-first session (see E/CN.3/2010/20). The item will again be on the agenda in 2012.